

Hafiz poems

1a.

I said: “The grief I feel is all for you”

she said: “Your grief will end”.

I said: “Be as the moon to me”; she said:

“That moon might rise, my friend”.

I said: “Learn faithfulness from those whose love is trustworthy and true”

She said: “That’s something moon-like pretty girls are rarely known to do”.

I said: “I’ll bind my eyes up, and I’ll keep your image from my sight”

She said: “My image is a thief that moves invisibly by night”.

I said: “Your curls’ scent has misled my mind, I wander far and wide”

She said: “And when you understand, you’ll see that scent is your true guide”.

I said: “Happy the scent from beauty’s garden, blowing so fresh and sweet”

She said: “Cool is the breeze that blows on us from the beloved’s street”.

I said: “Wanting to kiss your ruby lips has all but murdered me”

She said: “Be as a slave, my lips know how to treat slaves lovingly”.

I said: “When will your generous heart make peace between us – when, my dear?”

She said: “Don’t speak of this at all until my heart says peace is here”.

I said: “And did you see how happiness sped by, and could not last?”

She said: “Silence, Hafiz; this time of grief will also, soon, have passed”.¹

¹ Ghazal 227. *Faces of Love*, trans. Dick Davis, 88-89.

1b.

I said: "I'm suffering because of you"

He said: "Your suffering will come to an end".

I said: "Be my moon"

He said: "If it comes up".

I said: "From those versed in love learn the rite of faithfulness"

He said: "This rite rarely appears in the moon-faced".

I said: "To your image I have tied the way of sight"

He said: "There is a thief in the night; it enters by another route".

I said: "The scent of your tress has made me the lost of the world"

He said: "Did you but know, it is this that would be your guide".

I said: "Happy the air that from the garden of beauty arises"

He said: "Cool the breeze that blows from the street of the beloved".

I said: "The sweet drink of your ruby² has killed me with desire"

He said: "Perform you it its service, that it may become a slave-cherisher".

I said: "When will your compassionate heart purpose peace?"

He said: "Until the moment for this arises, say not a word to anyone".

I said: "Did you see how the time of pleasure came to an end?"

He said: "Be quiet, Hafiz, because this anguish too will end".³

² The ruby may symbolise the lips of the beloved. It comes from a coarse rock created by the transforming rays of the sun.

³ Ghazal 227 (Avery 292). Cf. Avery p. 253 (ghazal 193)

2a.

Last night⁴ I saw the angels
tapping at the wine-shop's door,
and kneading Adam's dust⁵,
and moulding it as cups for wine.

And, where I sat beside the road,
these messengers of heaven
gave me their wine to drink,
so that their drunkenness was mine.

The heavens could not bear
the heavy trust they had been given⁶
and lots were cast, and crazed
Hafiz's name received the sign.

Forgive the seventy-two
competing factions⁷ – all their tales
mean that the Truth is what
they haven't seen, and can't define.

But I am thankful that there's peace
between Him now, and me;
in celebration of our pact
the houris drink their wine.

And fire is not what gently smiles
from candles' flames, it's what
annihilates the flocking moths
that flutter round His shrine.

⁴ According to the commentators, 'last night' (*dush*) is a reference to four verses of the Quran that describe the creation (32:4-7: "God is He who has created the heavens and the earth and all that is between them in 6 days, and settled Himself upon the Throne..."), particularly: "[6] Such is He who knows what is hidden and what is evident, the Almighty, the Merciful, [7] who made all things good that He created, and who made man of clay"; the event of human creation from the Wine of Love is as recent as 'last night' in the eyes of the perfect ones.

⁵ Referring to the Divine Saying (*hadith qudsi*): "I kneaded the clay of Adam for forty days and nights."

⁶ The Trust (*amāna*), according to the Quran (33:72), was offered to the heavens, the earth and the mountains, and they all refused. Only man accepted. According to Ibn 'Arabi, this Trust means to manifest the Name Allah and act as his vicegerent (*khalīfa*) in creation.

⁷ A reference to the prophetic saying: "After me my community will be divided into seventy-three different sects, out of which one will be saved, and the seventy-two others will be in hell."

No-one has drawn aside the veil
of Thought as Hafiz has,
or combed the curls of Speech
as his sharp pen has, line by line.⁸

⁸ *Faces of Love*, 40-41. Ghazal 179.

2b.

Last night I saw that the angels knocked at the wine-shop's door,
Adam's clay was kneaded, and cast into a wine-measure's mould.⁹

The dwellers in the veiled sanctuary of holiness and the chastity of the angels' realm
Me, sifting the dust of the road, suffused with the wine of ecstasy.

The heavens could not bear the burden of the Trust.
The lot for this was cast in the name of mad me.

Establish forgiveness for the war of the seventy-two sects;
because they did not see the track of the True, they took fable's way.

Let there be thanks for this, that between him and me peace has come;
the houris dancing have drained the cup of gratitude.

Fire is not that with the flame of which the candle laughs;
Fire is that with which the moths' harvest was set alight.

No-one has unveiled the face of contemplation like Hafiz,
since the tress-tips of speech were combed by a pen.¹⁰

⁹ According to Avery, since it was God that kneaded Adam's clay, these verbs can and should be read as passive. After Adam was kneaded, the angels inspected his form but could not comprehend its mystery.

¹⁰ Ghazal 179. Avery, 238-239.

2c.

Last night I heard angels pounding on the door
of the tavern. They had kneaded the clay of Adam,
and they threw the clay in the shape of a wine cup.

I am a nobody, just a squatter sitting in the dust
of the public street; and yet these sacred beings from
the innermost sanctuary drank some wine with me.

The heavens could not bear the weight of the Trust.
When the lots were thrown again, the Trust
fell on man, on me, an idiot and a fool.

Let's forgive the seventy-two sects for their ridiculous
wars and misbehaviours. Because they couldn't accept
the path of truth, they took the road of moonshine.

Thanks be to God, the Darling whom I love and I
live in peace. Each time the playful angels in Paradise catch
sight of us, they reach for their wineglasses and dance.

The fire is not that physical fire that makes
the candle seem to laugh. The true fire
is the flame which consumes the treasures of the moth.

Ever since the original pen first combed the curly hair
of speech, no one has drawn aside the veil
from the face of thought more gracefully than Hafiz does.¹¹

¹¹ Ghazal 179. Robert Bly, 39-40.